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The Architect and the Construction of the Church of El Sagrario in Quito*

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The imposing colonial church of El Sagrario in Quito is one of the most well-known historical monuments in the old city center (Figure 1). El Sagrario abuts the south wall of the Cathedral, to which it is now connected by an interior portal, and serves as parish church for the Cathedral sector in the heart of colonial Quito. Despite its popular and historic status, almost nothing is known of its origins, authorship, patronage, or process of construction. Even the dating of the church has been the subject of speculation by historians, although most agree that it was begun in the mid seventeenth century, and that it was completed by 1706.

Historians have proposed a number of different architects as possible authors of the building, including Brother Francisco Ayerdi, Fray Antonio Rodríguez, José Jaime Ortiz, and Gabriel de Escorza (Bayón and Marx 1989, 41; Gento Sanz 1942, 23–24, n. 14; Navarro 1961, 167; Vargas 1967, 324; Vargas *et al.* 1985, 114). A relatively recent historical marker located on the façade attributes the building to Fray Antonio Rodríguez, the architect of several important seventeenth-century churches and sanctuaries in Quito, and the façade to Gabriel de Escorza. More explicit information is provided by an inscription carved on the façade above the main portal, which reads, "This façade was begun under the care of D. Gabriel de Escorça Escalante on 30 April of the year 1699 and it was completed 2 June of 1706."[1] Gabriel de Escorza cannot be considered a likely candidate for the architect of the church, however, since the inscription states that the façade was simply under his care. With respect to the state of knowledge about the construction of El Sagrario, the twentieth-century Ecuadorian art historian José Gabriel Navarro lamented, "We have not found the slightest indication among the archival documents regarding the architect of one of the most important monuments of Quiteñan architecture … The account book of its construction [*libro de fábrica*] does not exist" (1961, 167).[2]

The book of construction has now come to light (Figure 2), and it affords an opportunity to illuminate not only the historical importance of the building and the architect, but that of the patron as well.[3] The *libro de fábrica* makes it abundantly clear that the sole patron, overseer, and decorator of the church was the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament. This confraternity is the earliest documented brotherhood in Quito, established in 1543, just eight years after the foundation of the city itself. The confraternity was initially housed in an adobe and thatch structure on the main plaza which served as the city's first church. In

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FIGURE 1. Façade of the Church of El Sagrario, Quito. Photo: Hernán Navarrete.

1545, the church was elevated to the status of a cathedral, and in 1562 construction began on the building that stands today on the central plaza. Upon the completion of the Cathedral in 1578–1579, the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament was located in a side chapel, which it shared with an altar and confraternity dedicated to the Virgin of Copacabana for well over a century until its members made the decision to construct a separate building of their own alongside the Cathedral in the late seventeenth century.[4]

Several of the early rule books of the confraternity survive, all dating from 1543, the year that marked its foundation (AHBCQ *Fondo Jijón y Camaaño*, primera serie, 7/10; 17/11).[5] The confraternity was dedicated to the adoration of the Holy Sacrament, and especially to its salvific powers. According to the preamble to the ordinances, the founding members decided to form the confraternity "not solely for the honor of our lord and god [but] more for the health and salvation of our souls" (7/10, fol. 172v).[6] Given that the Spanish citizens of Quito at that time were the conquistadors and first colonists who found

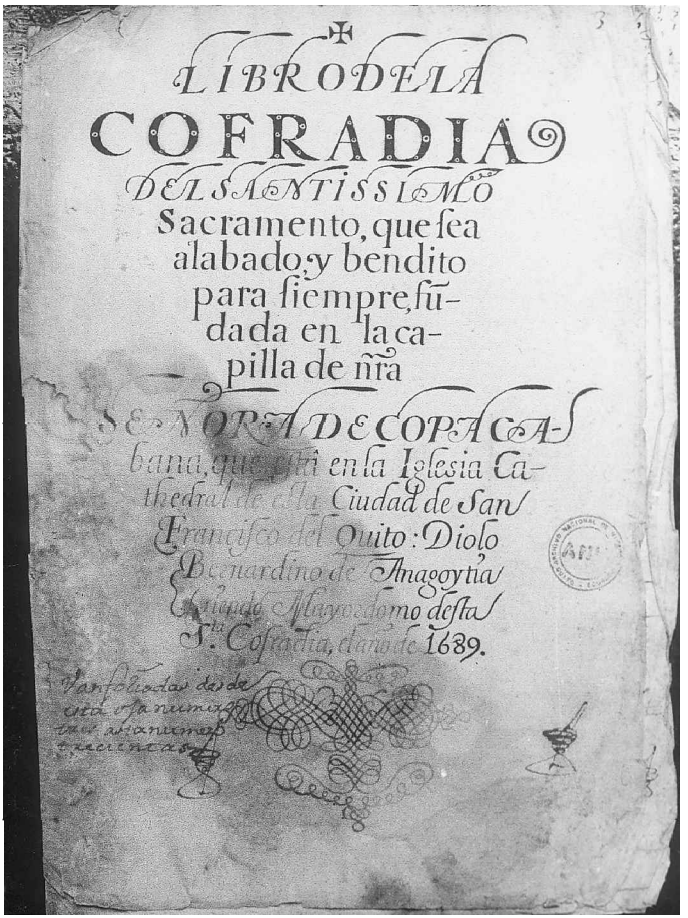

FIGURE 2. Frontispiece of the *Libro de Fábrica* of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, 1689–1716. Photo: Hernán Navarrete.

themselves in an unfamiliar land, distant from the spiritual traditions and comforts of Europe, they likely felt a strong impetus to form a confraternity in order to ensure the salvation of their souls and an appropriate Christian burial. The establishment of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament afforded above all a means of securing important spiritual insurance, and the confraternity documents emphasize that many such benefits would accrue to their members. The preamble to the rule books highlights these attractive features of membership, stating, "And to incline us toward [the Holy Sacrament] in love and devotion, the most holy pope Paul III now has conceded us many graces and indulgences and remissions [of sins] and pardons to all those who become brothers of the Most Holy Sacrament and who accompany it [the Most Holy Sacrament] when it goes out to visit a sick person" (7/10, fols. 172v–73r).[7] Indeed, with respect to indulgences, there was ample incentive to join the confraternity, for the chapters of their rule books are followed by 13 folios that list more than 125 separate occasions in order of feast days, week days, and

special actions and devotions on which the myriad indulgences, graces, pardons, and remissions accorded to the confraternity might be gained by its members (7/11, fols. 194r–200v).

Following the charitable tradition of European confraternities, the Most Holy Sacrament also performed the Acts of Mercy within the community. The principal Act undertaken by the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, and the focus of much of its day to day activity, was that of visiting the sick and dying. Indeed, the confraternity came to identify itself over time as that of the Most Holy Sacrament and Viaticum of the Sick. Several chapters in the rule books directly address these procedures, describing the procession with the viaticum under a baldachin to the house of the afflicted accompanied by confraternity members carrying lighted candles (17/10, fol. 173v). The records demonstrate that this practice was extended to the poor and needy of the community, and especially to those incarcerated in the Royal Prison. In a related manner, the confraternity also functioned as a burial society, organizing funeral processions (with a certain number of members and lighted candles), and offering masses and prayers for the souls of the deceased. Burial benefits were extended to the families of members and, in keeping with the confraternity's charitable role, to poor members of the community (17/10, fols. 174v–76r).

Membership in the confraternity apparently was not limited to Spaniards, for according to its rules anyone who was "calm and of good life and reputation and not rebellious so that the *cabildo* might remain in peace and tranquillity" might be accepted as a member (7/10, fol. 173v).[8] Not surprisingly, however, no indigenous names appear on the early membership rosters, and the only women initially permitted to join were the wives of members. All members were required to swear an oath to uphold the rules of the confraternity, and were forbidden from discussing any of their activities outside of the meetings.

The first members of the confraternity were among the upper echelons of the Spanish conquistadors and colonists, and included numerous captains and city officials. The rule book of August 1543 is signed by four founding members, Captain Fernando Ortiz y Mena, Captain Francisco Ruiz, Pedro de Baesde, and Hernando de la Parra (7/10, fol. 176v). Historical records show that at least two of these members, Francisco Ruiz and Hernando de la Parra, were among the founding citizens of Quito (Descalci 1978, 52). During the sixteenth century, both held large *encomiendas*, or land and labor grants, in the region.[9] In a document of 1572, Francisco Ruiz is cited as one of the two wealthiest citizens in the *audiencia* of Quito (Ponce Leiva 1992, 1:206). The membership roster demonstrates that numerous captains, civil authorities, and *encomenderos* joined the confraternity shortly after it was founded (7/11, fols. 192r–93v).

Over the following centuries, the confraternity maintained a membership of elite and wealthy citizens, and thus developed into a powerful and financially sound institution. Like most confraternities, the finances of the Most Holy Sacrament were derived from membership fees and dues, alms collected in the streets and offered by members, testamentary bequests and, above all, *censos*, or the interest on rental properties owned by the institution. In 1693, for example, the confraternity recorded an income from *censos* of 4,339 *patacones*,[10] which accounted for 60 per cent of its annual income (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*,

caja 5, expte. 2, fols. 48r–49r). The economic prosperity of the brotherhood, combined with the need for a more ample and appropriate private chapel, led to the decision to construct a new building entirely dedicated to its purposes. Negotiations with the Cathedral Chapter suggested the use of a large space located directly to the south side of the Cathedral. However, the existence of a ravine in this location would require a feat of engineering in order to build a stable base. In search of a solution, the confraternity set about engaging an architect to prepare the foundation and to design and oversee the construction of the church.

In the *cabildo* (board meeting) celebrated on 5 November 1694, the members of the board noted that they were now prepared to commission an architect to begin construction of the new chapel. According to the minutes, the brothers noted that "finding [present] in this city Don Jaime Ortiz, who is said to be an architect, and having been informed by the brothers that he is an expert in the art, it appeared to them appropriate that the said person undertake the said work and construction … the contract was drawn up with the said architect so that he could begin the said work" (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fol. 66r).[11] The document of commission, dated 5 November 1694, states that the architect José Jaime Ortiz was charged with designing and overseeing the construction of the church, "beginning it from its first foundations until it is entire and finished with the required offices of sacristies, vaults, and other necessities for the service of the said Chapel" (66v).[12] For his services, Ortiz was to be paid the impressive sum of 4,500 *patacones* in three installments: 2,250 upon initiation of the work, another 1,125 *patacones* at the halfway point, and 1,125 *patacones* when the work was completed as specified. For his part, the architect obligated his person, belongings, and rights and actions at present and in the future as collateral against his completion of the work (67r). The signature of the architect, José Jaime Ortiz, along with those of the governing members of the confraternity and two representatives from the Cathedral Chapter, appears at the end of the document.

In a subsequent meeting of the *cabildo* on 12 March 1695, the governing board of the confraternity added a clause to the contract with the architect in which they stipulated that, in addition to overseeing the project, Ortiz be required to work personally on the construction, and that he be visibly present each day on the job. For this added obligation, the board awarded him an annual salary of 100 *patacones* in addition to the previously agreed upon fee (69v).[13] Construction thus began on the Church of El Sagrario in 1695 under close supervision by both the architect and the confraternity.

Almost nothing is known of the life and work of the architect José Jaime Ortiz, not even the dates and places of his birth and death. Prior to the discovery of this *libro de fábrica*, the only building in Quito that has been documented as by Ortiz is the Church of the Monastery of La Merced, for which he signed a commission in 1701 (Proaño 1989, 96). Recently discovered documents now permit some facts of the architect's life to be reconstructed. Counter to the claims of local historians, who have identified José Jaime Ortiz as a native Quiteñan (Proaño 1989, 94; Navarro 1961, 92), the architect was a Spaniard, born in the kingdom of Valencia.[14] Upon his arrival in Quito in 1694 *en route*

to Lima, the architect came to the attention of the majordomos of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament (AAQ *Cofradías*, caja 2, año 1699, fol. 1r). Capitalizing on the architect's presence in the city, the confraternity offered him the commission to design and build their church. Ortiz was 38 years old when he signed the contract to build El Sagrario in 1694, and therefore presumably had some previous architectural experience, although where he acquired his trade remains unclear. The Church of El Sagrario is thus the first architectural commission undertaken by Ortiz in Quito, and is also the only known architectural commission in Quito that he saw through to the final phase of construction, as will be demonstrated below.

The confraternity was intimately involved in every aspect of the construction and decoration of El Sagrario. Dating from the time of the architectural commission, special officers were elected to oversee specific aspects of the work. In the *cabildo* of 12 March 1695, in addition to the election of the traditional offices of *mayordomo mayor* and *mayordomos menores*, the offices of *mayordomo* of the quarry and *mayordomo* of the construction were created (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fol. 69r). As the building progressed, the numbers of *mayordomos menores* increased, and a variety of new offices were created to address specific needs. For example, in the *cabildo* of 6 April 1699, the office of *mayordomo de la cantera y de la portada* (majordomo of the quarry and the façade) was created, marking the year in which stone for the façade was first quarried (171r). Not surprisingly, the first to hold that office was Captain Gabriel de Escorza, the man whose name is carved on the façade, and who was considered by some scholars to be the architect of the building itself. Gabriel de Escorza continued to serve each year thereafter as *mayordomo de la portada* until it was completed in 1706.[15] Undoubtedly proud of the results of his oversight, he likely paid to have the record of his contribution carved above the main portal.

The confraternity officers maintained close supervision over all of the materials and processes of construction. Quality control was an important issue. In 1704, for example, a load of 500 bricks arrived and was summarily rejected by one of the *mayordomos* because they were "badly fired and [too] small and will not serve for the work" (179v).[16] In another instance, one of the *mayordomos menores* was fired from his position "for not carrying out his obligations" and was immediately replaced by another member of the confraternity (228r).[17] It is worth noting that the confraternity officers elected to oversee the various aspects of construction pursued their charges as full time employment, and were well paid for their efforts.

The *libro de fábrica* records in great detail the expenditures for the materials of construction, as well as for the manpower. Payments for huge quantities of brick, stone, tiles, and slaked lime dominate the yearly expenses throughout the period of construction. Notable events, however, such as the laying of the first stone in 1695 (67v), or the consecration of the church in 1715 (277r), are mentioned in the *libro de fábrica* only in passing reference to their associated costs. Among the more interesting expenses in terms of construction processes are the many payments for mule-loads of pumice stone that were brought from a special quarry in Latacunga, located nearly 50 miles from Quito over steep and

treacherous Andean peaks and passes.[18] In 1700, for example, the *libro de fábrica* records a payment of 300 *patacones* to the *cacique* (indigenous leader) of Sangolquí for 300 mule-loads of pumice stone (128r). The documents indicate that the lightweight, volcanic stone was used to construct the vaults of the church—a logical and appropriate structural solution.

Also recorded in the *libro de fábrica* are the salaries and payments to the many carpenters, masons, artisans, and laborers that contributed to the various aspects of construction. In this respect, it is worth noting that although the confraternity financed and oversaw the building process, the actual construction was undertaken almost exclusively by native workers. Records of payment to the "indios albañiles y peones" (Indian carpenters and peons) dominate the records of expenditure. The accounts document that the sculptures decorating the façade and the interior of the building also were the work of native artists.[19] Thus, like most colonial buildings, this church was designed and overseen by Spaniards, but was constructed and decorated by natives.

By 1699, the construction of the church was well underway: the walls and pillars were in place, the vaults, dome, and cupolas were being erected, and the façade was initiated. In this year, the confraternity recorded the payment of the second major installment of the architect's fee, marking the halfway point of construction (122r). The imposing size of the building and the rapidity with which it took shape must have impressed the local authorities, for in this year the architect Ortiz appears in the documents as "arquitecto mayor nombrado por la ciudad" (master architect, named by the city), and is thereafter referred to as "Captain" Ortiz (117r). Two years later, with the vaults and dome in place and the façade well underway, Ortiz was awarded the commission to construct the Church of the Monastery of La Merced (Proaño 1989, 96), a job that he undertook while the Church of El Sagrario was still being completed.

The overall design and expanse of the church of El Sagrario are impressive. It is a three-aisle, rectangular-plan church with massive pillars arranged in the form of a cross. The crossing is capped by a high dome with an ample lantern, and smaller cupolas provide light for each of the side aisles. The massive dome is decorated on the interior with polychrome sculptural reliefs and elaborate mural paintings, and cartouches containing the four evangelists adorn the pendentives (Figure 3). The interior is imposing in terms of the relationship of the soaring vaults to the relatively narrow width of the nave. It contains an ample sacristy, a baptistery,[20] and several offices, and six impressive Baroque altar-pieces occupy the side aisles, leading the eye to the towering Baroque main altar that dominates the apse. One particularly spectacular feature of the church is the *mampara*, an elaborately carved, polychromed and gilded inner portal, that was completed by an unknown artist in 1747 (Navarro 1961, 169).[21]

Perhaps the most impressive architectural element of the Church of El Sagrario is the commanding façade (Figure 1), which was constructed between 1699 and 1706 in a restrained Baroque style that was undoubtedly the design of the architect himself. The façade is divided into two stories that are separated by heavy projecting cornices, and is crowned by a dramatically projecting broken pediment. The two groups of three Ionic columns on the lower level are balanced in the upper story by equal groupings of shorter columns of the Corinthian

FIGURE 3. Evangelist (St. Matthew) cartouche located in one of the pendentives, El Sagrario. Photo: Hernán Navarrete.

order. Imposing stone sculptures of Saints Peter and Paul occupy high positions to either side of the upper level, and slightly below them stand sculptures personifying the virtues of Faith and Hope. The primary role and identity of the patron of the church, however, is described within the central, vertical section of the façade. The keystone of the main portal bears a cartouche containing two angels that support a eucharistic chalice, reminding the viewer of the primary devotion of the confraternity. Personifying the confraternity's charitable role, the virtue of Charity in the traditional form of a mother figure nurturing several infants appears in a large sculptural relief panel that is centered above the main portal.[22] Centered high above, the single large niche within the dramatic broken pediment that crowns the façade must originally have housed a sculpture of a monstrance containing the Holy Sacrament.[23] Additional sculptures once filled the empty niches that occupy the outer spaces beside the columns on the lower register. Ornately carved planiform relief sculptures decorate all flat areas of the façade, incorporating grotesque masks within complex organic forms and strapwork.

During the colonial period, El Sagrario was one of the most popular, impressive, and luxuriant churches in Quito. Numerous eighteenth-century chroniclers and travelers found it remarkable and praiseworthy. Jorge Juan and

Antonio de Ulloa, Spanish scientists who passed through Quito in the 1741, observed that the Church of El Sagrario, "in addition to being very spacious, and [made] completely of stone, is beautiful architecture, and the exterior is no less harmonious than the well designed interior", adding that it "is rich in all decorations, as much in silver as in textiles, and very expensive ornaments" (1748, Libro V, Cap. IV:354–55).[24] In 1766, the ex-governor of the *audiencia*, Dionisio de Alsedo y Herrera, submitted a report to the king in which he lauded the churches of Quito, observing that there were "so many monuments of true religion, and devout and Catholic magnificence, such as the greatest and most sumptuous temple of the Cathedral, another contiguous church, with the name of the Chapel of El Sagrario, and two great exterior doors and one interior [door] that connects them, so that they rival one another in the grandeur of the buildings and the services and adornments of their cults; and in the latter [El Sagrario], [there are] two resident priests with their assistants for the administration of the extensive parishioners of its most principal and distinguished citizens, that occupy the largest and most extended part of the city center" (Ponce Leiva 1992, 2:421).[25] The Jesuit priest Mario Cicala, writing in 1771, described the Church of El Sagrario as "sumptuous, magnificent and truly superb and beautiful", noting that it possessed "a very high and majestic dome constructed in all perfection, supported by four great pillars and by four magnificent and spacious true arches" (Cicala 1994 [1771], 188).[26] In the late eighteenth century, the British statesman W. B. Stevenson, who resided and traveled for many years in South America, remarked that the Church of El Sagrario was "a handsome stone edifice, containing some good sculpture and paintings, executed by natives" (1804, 1:281).

The architect Ortiz gained wealth as well as recognition in Quito during the final years of the construction of El Sagrario. Between the Church of El Sagrario and that of La Merced, his ample fees and salaries permitted him to purchase and trade several expensive and well-located houses in the city between the years 1703 and 1706,[27] although he was not always successful in his real estate transactions.[28] Beyond his architectural endeavors, Ortiz was clearly an adventurous and active businessman: dozens of notarial documents reveal that he both borrowed and lent large sums of money, and was involved in the purchase and sale of a large number of *censos* between 1699 and 1706. The revenues generated from these transactions permitted Ortiz to acquire, sell and trade numerous houses, properties and slaves during the same period. Ortiz's enterprising and speculative nature as a businessman is particularly well illustrated by his investment in a gold mine in the *asiento* of Latacunga with several partners in 1706 (AHNQ *Notaria Primera*, vol. 293 (1705–6), Gregorio López, fols. 588r–v).[29] Despite the demands of two major architectural projects, and the various business deals and lawsuits in which he was involved during this period, the architect actively pursued adventurous projects with his colleagues. One such speculative venture, however, dramatically affected the life of the architect and, as a result, the architectural history of Quito in an unexpected and irrevocable manner.

The remarkable facts of this story are set forth in the detailed testimony of witnesses in a criminal proceeding that was adjudicated between the months of

April and September, 1707 (AHNQ *Criminales*, caja 17, expte. 5, fols. 1r–178r).[30] According to the testimony of witnesses, at dawn on the morning of 14 April 1707, the architect set out on an expedition to climb the volcano Pichincha that overlooks the city of Quito in the company of five Spanish and Creole colleagues, the prior of the Dominican retreat, two Indian serfs, and his black slave. The group was accompanied by several mules laden with provisions and a large tent. The presence of the Dominican friar was explained by the many reports of "demonic apparitions" said to have been experienced by those who had previously scaled the volcano (127v). The friar thus came equipped with an ample supply of holy water to ward off any evil spirits. The stated reason for the expedition was to seek out "gold and *huacas*" (Inca "idols" or sacred sites—essentially "buried treasure") that were reportedly hidden in a deep ravine at the very top of the volcano (21v ff.).

Despite the threat of inclement weather, the group set off at dawn and, after an overnight stay at the halfway point, made camp on a crest near the top of the volcano in the vicinity of several ravines. The weather was extremely bad and, despite the general enthusiasm of the group, they spent most of the first day huddled in the tent making plans for the next day's exploration. According to one witness, they would know the spot where the gold and *huacas* were hidden because it was marked by the bones of an Indian woman who had been struck by lightning (15v). With this clue in mind, and despite the still threatening weather conditions, the group set out the following afternoon to search the area. They dispersed in ones and twos along the edges of several steep ravines in search of suitable routes of descent. Soon, most members of the expedition were out of sight of the others. Visibility was further impeded by an influx of heavy clouds, which was closely followed by a pounding hailstorm. All witnesses described the intensity of the storm, the lack of suitable cover, and the frigid temperature. One by one, the freezing and bedraggled members of the group found their way back to the tent, where a fire was maintained by the Indians. Lengthy descriptions of just how cold and miserable they were, and what extreme measures had to be taken before they finally warmed up, dominate the testimony of the witnesses at this juncture.

At nightfall the expedition members in the tent soon realized that they were missing one member of their group, a Spaniard named Francisco Fons. Still suffering from exposure to the cold, the Spaniards directed the Indians to go out in search of Fons. The Indians departed into the night, taking with them several lit candles to aid in their search. All witnesses testified that on this night there was a total lunar eclipse. Searching for the missing man in pitch blackness near dangerous ravines, the Indians resorted to shouting the man's name, and reportedly heard him respond to their calls, although some claimed that it was only an echo. When Fons failed to appear, the Indians placed several lit candles in the fallen hail in a row leading back to the tent in order to direct Fons should he near the location of the camp. The following morning, Fons still had not returned, and all members of the expedition went out in a search party, covering a broad area, including the nearby ravines. No sign of the missing man was found anywhere in the vicinity. After a fruitless day, the members decided to return to Quito to

mount a more extensive search party, and before nightfall they packed up and departed for the city below.

Upon their report to the authorities in Quito, all members of the expedition were immediately imprisoned in the Royal Jail, where they were manacled hand and foot. It is at this point that the criminal proceedings begin. Charges of murder were pressed against the members of the expedition by Francisca de Torres Pizarro, the wife of the missing man. It is worth noting at this point that Francisco Fons was a minister (*chanciller*) of the *real audiencia* of Quito, and an important businessman within the community. His wife, Francisca, came from a very powerful local family, three members of which served as city councilmen (*cabildantes*) in the period between 1668 and 1716 (Ponce Leiva 1998, 275). Francisca's father, Francisco de Torres Pizarro, had been elected an official (*alcalde*) of the Inquisition in 1668 (*Actas del Cabildo* ... 1995, 268–71), and her uncle, Alonso, had served as a judge (*oidor*) of the *audiencia* during the late seventeenth century (*Actas del Cabildo* … 1995, 349 ff.). The wife's sister, Isabel, was the widow of Captain Antonio Gómez Lasso de la Vega, who had presided for years as chief of police (*alguacil mayor*) of the *audiencia* before his death in 1704 (Gangotena y Jijón 1951, 1). The powerful family connections enjoyed by Fons and his wife serve to explain to some extent the subsequent treatment of the accused and the protracted length of the criminal proceeding.

Over the following weeks, the city authorities mounted several search parties that combed the heights of Pichincha, but no sign was found of the missing man. During this time, the members of the expedition were interrogated and periodically subjected to torture in order to extract confessions. The incarcerated parties obtained a lawyer, who submitted numerous letters to the court claiming the innocence of his clients and demanding that they be released from prison, especially in view of the fact that no *corpus delicti* had been found.

By early May, one search party reported finding clothing that belonged to the missing man suspiciously laid out on the snow as though they were drying in the sun (30r). The wife positively identified the clothing as belonging to her husband. The authorities were unable to determine whether vague stains on the clothing were the result of blood or of some other substance. The wife countered that the clothing had been washed clean of blood and planted there by friends of the accused to suggest that her husband was still alive. Siding with the wife's prosecuting attorney, the head prosecutor (*fiscal mayor*) of the *audiencia* wrote letters to the court demanding that the prisoners be subjected to more frequent and severe torture in order to extract confessions.

Finding themselves in desperate and intolerable circumstances, two of the accused, José Jaime Ortiz and Antonio Matheus, wrote a letter to the court offering their houses and belongings as collateral for their release from prison. Their houses and belongings were indeed confiscated and placed under embargo by the authorities; however, the prisoners were not released (34r–40v). The wife demanded that the prisoners' belongings be used to pay her a living stipend in the absence of her husband's support.

The lawyer for the accused posed questions regarding Fons's business dealings and penchant for gambling, and suggested that Fons may have had good reason to "disappear." The lawyer then proposed that search parties be sent out

to investigate the towns along the road to Esmeraldas on the coast. Subsequent evidence was introduced to show that Fons, in the company of two mulattos, had fled for the region of Esmeraldas (32r). No further action appears to have been taken by the court to corroborate this testimony; however, the defense also introduced a series of witnesses who testified to the nature of Fons's business transactions and gambling habit, as well as to the very close friendship that existed between the architect and the missing man (91r–104v).

Countering the defense, in June the wife's lawyer introduced evidence that the accused had indeed murdered Fons, and had brought his bloodied body down the volcano that same night to the small, rural church of Santa Clara, just outside of Quito. According to this account, the accused awoke the Indian sacristan and his wife in the middle of the night, and demanded that they bury the body in the church (133r–v). Furthermore, it was alleged that the wife of the Indian sacristan was forced to wash the blood-stained clothing, implying that this clothing was subsequently planted on the volcano by the accused or their cohorts, where it was later discovered by search parties. The court demanded that the Indian sacristan and his wife be brought in for questioning, along with the *cacique* of the town of Santa Clara de San Millán, and several other native witnesses. Weeks passed before the witnesses could be located and brought in to testify. In the end, the testimony of the sacristan and his wife, provided through an official translator, was unequivocal: no such event had transpired (134r–37r).

In the meanwhile, the architect was suffering greatly in the Royal Prison beyond merely the typical difficulties and discomforts borne by the prisoners of the time. In late June, the lawyer for the defense sent a letter to the court in which he voiced the fervent request of the architect that he be moved from the Royal Prison to the public jail (*cárcel pública*) "because the chief of police of the court has come to hate and despise me and he [purposely] tries to annoy and bother me" (156r).[31] To reinforce the request, the architect himself wrote a lengthy letter to the court explaining why the move should be granted. An excerpt from this letter provides some idea of the conditions in which the architect found himself:

> Don Joseph Jayme Ortis prisoner in the royal jail of the court = I state that yesterday around nine o'clock in the morning the head sargeant don vicente de la Vega Came to this said Jail and with dissimulation said that I must go to the torture chamber without knowing why and he shut me up in it until five or more in the afternoon in order that I be persuaded to confess and it [a confession] did not occur and as a result of having been in the chamber the pains that already accompany me were more severe and for that Reason the doctor told me that I should not get out of bed. (157r)[32]

After reviewing the letters, the court decided not to permit the move, following the warning of the police chief that the prisoner might escape in the process. The court did, however, order that the chief of police "treat him [the architect] well And remove him from the torture chamber when he is sick" (156v).[33] The police chief then signed a statement promising "not to abuse the aforementioned [architect] verbally And being sick as he claims I will locate him in a decent part [of the prison] with every [measure] of care and custody" (156v).[34]

Months passed, and still the proceedings continued, fueled by the repeated

requests of the attorney general and the wife's lawyer for additional witnesses and more frequent torture of the prisoners. By early September, the accused had suffered the ill effects of prolonged incarceration and torture for five months. According to the letters written by their lawyer, their health was broken, five months had passed without their being able to change clothing, and they were in imminent danger of losing their lives in the freezing and unsanitary conditions of the prison. A special plea for the architect noted that he had not been able to stand on his feet in two months (168r–v). Still, more witnesses were brought in, and the criminal proceedings continued.

The final results of the proceedings are inconclusive in one respect, for although on 17 September, the court ultimately recommended that the accused be absolved of any crime, there is no specific record in the document of their release from prison. Even after the judgement of absolution was passed, the attorney general continued to demand that the decision be revoked (174r). His demands may have prevented the immediate release of the prisoners for some time. Finally, among the documents is an undated letter to the court submitted by one of the Spanish prisoners, Antonio Matheus, as executor for the architect José Jaime Ortiz, demanding that the belongings of the now deceased architect be released from embargo by the authorities so that Matheus, as the specified heir, might claim them (n.p.). We are thus left to speculate as to whether the architect died in prison in September 1707, or shortly after he was theoretically released. Regardless, it seems clear that five months in prison and repeated torture had damaged the architect's health to such an extent that it resulted in his death. It is worth recalling that the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament traditionally made regular visits to the Royal Prison to bring the viaticum to the sick and dying (of which there were undoubtedly many). In what would appear to be a sad twist of fate, the architect may have received the last rites from the very patrons of the church he was commissioned to construct.

What began as a convivial expedition among a group of colleagues resulted in the architect's loss of freedom, property, and ultimately his life. The loss also extends to the architectural history of the city of Quito, which as a result boasts only two buildings by this important architect, the Church of El Sagrario and the Church of La Merced. The latter church was in an intermediate phase of construction at the time of the architect's death in 1707, and was not completed and consecrated until 1737 (Proaño 1989, 110). El Sagrario, on the other hand, was virtually complete in 1707, lacking only the architectural decorations and details. Thus, it may be said that El Sagrario is the only church in Quito whose design and construction were completed by José Jaime Ortiz.

Remarkably, almost no mention of the architect's fate appears in the documents of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament. A single notation refers to the payment of 12 *pesos* to a master carpenter "for taking over the work during the time in which Don Jaime was in prison" (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fol. 209r). One might imagine that the confraternity had every reason to seek the release of the architect so that work on the church would not be interrupted.[35] Among the many witnesses who testified on behalf of the accused in the criminal proceedings, however, only one was a member of the confraternity, and his testimony, although vaguely supportive, was quite

summary (AHNQ *Criminales*, caja 17, expte. 5, fols. 123v–24v). Given the facts that, by 1707, the architectural structure of the church was complete, the façade had been finished the year before, the confraternity was in debt, and they were likely due to pay the final installment of the architect's fee quite soon, one might speculate that the confraternity may have had their reasons for remaining relatively aloof of the criminal proceedings.

Work continued on the church uninterrupted during the criminal proceedings and after the death of the architect. Master carpenters and confraternity members took over the position of the architect, and proceeded with the decoration of the interior and the tiling and roofing of the dome, cupolas, and vaults. Between 1707 and 1714, the interior decoration of the cupola was undertaken by native artists, an elaborate tabernacle to house the host was commissioned, two side altars were erected, and materials for the construction of the main altar were commissioned and prepared. As noted above, the majority of artists, carpenters and workmen remain unnamed in the documents; however, the references to payments consistently note that such workers were natives. For example, Indian sculptors and carpenters constructed the two side altars that were completed prior to the consecration of the church, those of Our Lady and San Isidro, which still stand opposite one another to either side of the chancel (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fol. 286v). One of the few instances in which native artists are named appears in a payment made in 1712 to the "Indian Blas Cinbaña sculptor" for carving the capitals and the four evangelists that adorn the pediments of the dome. Unfortunately, Cinbaña died before finishing the work, and another native artist, Pascual de Rojas, completed the sculptures of the four evangelists and the seraphim that adorn each of their cartouches in the same year (Figure 3) (254v).

By 1714, the architectural decoration of the interior of the church was nearing completion, and preparations were being made for the festivities to accompany its consecration and the official installation of the Holy Sacrament in the newly constructed tabernacle. In the *cabildo* of 22 March 1714, the confraternity appointed several members to take charge of the ephemeral decorations of all the chapels, the sacramental plays (*autos sacramentales*), and the fireworks displays that were to accompany the festivities (266r–67r).[36] The extensive preparations were undertaken well in advance, for it was not until 14 February 1715 that the church was consecrated, and the installation of the Holy Sacrament was appropriately delayed until the day of Corpus Christi of the same year (277r).

The expenses incurred by the confraternity for the Corpus Christi festivities of 1715 were understandably far greater than they had been in the past. The *libro de fábrica* permits us to envision something of the nature of the celebration in the notations of expenditures for ten pounds of incense, a range of fireworks, musicians, singers, and numerous, elaborate, newly commissioned ecclesiastical vestments, chalices, and other sacred utensils (285r–v). At the time of the installation festivities, the confraternity had invested a quarter of a century and more than 100,000 *patacones* in the construction and architectural decoration of the church. Corpus Christi in Quito in 1715 must have been a spectacular celebration to behold, as the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament celebrated the culmination and savored the fruits of their labor and dedication

embodied in the installation of the Holy Sacrament in their impressive new Church of El Sagrario. However, this church stands today not only as testimony to the work of the confraternity, but as a monument to the life and art of the architect, José Jaime Ortiz.

Notes

* I am grateful to the Aquinas Foundation and to the University of St. Thomas, whose generous support allowed me to undertake this research in Ecuador during the summer of 2000. This article is a summary of aspects of a more in-depth study of the architect José Jaime Ortiz that I am presently preparing as a book, which will be published in Quito in 2002.

[1] "Comenso esta portada al cuidado de D. Gabriel de Escorça Escalante en 30 abril del año de 1699 i se acabo 2 de junio de 1706."

[2] "En los papeles del archivo no hemos encontrado el más ligero indicio del autor de uno de los monumentos más correctos de la arquitectura quiteña […] Libro de fábrica no existe."

[3] "Libro de la Cofradía del Santissimo Sacramento, que sea alabado, y bendito para siempre, fu[n]dada en la capilla de n[uest]ra Señora de Copacabana en la Iglesia Cathedral de esta Ciudad de San Francisco del Quito: Diolo Bernardino de Anagoytia siendo Mayordomo desta S[an]ta Cofradía, el año de 1689." The *libro de fábrica* is divided into two parts that are located in separate sections of the Archivo Histórico Nacional de Quito: AHNQ *Religiosas*, caja 7, expte. 1-VII-1692, and AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2.

[4] For the most recent history of the Cathedral of Quito that is based on primary documents, see Marcela Alemán A. *et al*. (1997). References to the chapel in which the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament was located appear in the "Libros del Cabildo de la Catedral", Archivo de la Catedral de Quito (ACQ), especially Libro 9 (1646–1673), fols. 291v–92r, *et passim*.

[5] Three copies of the rule book of 1543 exist among the cited documents: one is dated February 1543; one August 1543; the third is undated, but obviously from the same year. Each rule book exhibits minor differences. To avoid confusion, hereafter I will refer only to the two dated rule books, which are referenced following their catalog numbers as 7/10 (August) and 7/11 (February).

[6] "… no solamente para la honrra de n[uest]ro dios y señor mas para la salud y saluaçion de n[uest]ras anymas".

[7] "E por nos ynclinar en su amor E devocion nos conçedio su santidad del submo pontifiçe paolo terçio agora reciuen muchas gracias E yndulgencias E remisiones e perdones a todos aquellos que fueren cofrades del sanctissimo sacramento E le acompañaren quando saliere a visitar algun enfermo".

[8] "… quieta y de buena vida e fama e no reboltosa porquel cauyldo este en paz y en quietud".

[9] Hernando de la Parra was granted the title to Chumaque, Caque, and Cañares by President Gasca, and Francisco Ruiz was given the estates of Canzacoto, Pingolqui, Pifo, Inga, Pilloli, Chañanchillo, and Uyumbicho by the conquistador Francisco Pizarro (Ponce Leiva 1992, 1:202, 204).

[10] The *patacón* was a silver coin weighing one ounce. The *patacon* and the *peso* (which were of equivalent material and value) were the coins of greatest value during the colonial period (Estupiñán Viteri 1997, 262).

[11] "… y hallandose en esta dicha Ciudad Don Jaime Ortis que dijo ser arquitecto, y auiendose informado dichos Cofrades ser perito en la materia les parecio ser Vtil que el suso dicho corriese con dicha obra y fabrica … hicieren el consierto con dicho arquitecto para que se diese principio a dicha Obra".

[12] "… enpesandola desde sus primeros simientos hasta darla entera y acauada con las oficinas necesarias de sacristias bouedas y demas menesteres para el seruiçio de dicha Capilla".

[13] Several years after the work was initiated, the architect's salary was raised to 200 *patacones* per annum.

[14] The architect's personal testimony as to his peninsular origins is found in AHNQ *Criminales*, caja 17, expte. 5, fol. 55r.

[15] In this regard, it is worth noting that Gabriel de Escorza first served as *mayordomo mayor* of

the confraternity in 1697, and was thus a major participant in the construction of the church from its initial phase of construction. According to the *libro de fábrica*, Escorza departed Quito in 1707, when the façade was complete, on a trip to an unspecified destination. His name does not reappear thereafter in the confraternity records.

[16] "… mal cocidos y pequeños y no sirven para la obra".

[17] "… por no cumplir con sus obligaciones".

[18] See, for example, AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fols. 117v, 128r, 141v, 150r.

[19] A more detailed exploration of the contributions of native artists will appear in my forthcoming book, as cited above.

[20] The present baptistery chapel is a later addition, constructed in 1769 (Navarro 1961, 169).

[21] Strangely, Vargas *et al*. (1977, 61) suggest that Gabriel de Escorza was the artist of the *mampara*, noting that it was constructed between 1699 and 1706; an attribution that, even in light of the misattribution of the façade of the church itself, makes little sense. Navarro (1961, 169) rightly observes that the *mampara* bears an inscription that dates its completion in 1747.

[22] Navarro (1960, 47) identifies the sculptural relief panel as representing the Nativity; however, this subject bears no direct relevance to the activities of the confraternity. The reclining figure of a woman surrounded by three young children is clearly visible in the panel.

[23] A sculpture of a monstrance crowning the façade would certainly be the most appropriate image, and a photograph from the early 1920s shows just such a sculpture located within this niche (Gangotena y Jijón 1922, n.p.).

[24] "… fuera de ser muy capaz, y toda de Piedra, tiene bella Arquitectura, y no es menos harmoniosa la exterior que bien distribuída la de adentro", "es rica en todos adornos, assi de Plata, como de Telas, y muy costosos Ornamentos".

[25] "… tantos monumentos de veradera religión y magnificencia pía y católica, como el mayor y más sumptuoso templo de su Catedral, otra contigua iglesia, con el nombre de Capilla del Sagrario, y 2 grandes puertas exteriores y una interior para la comunicación, en que se compiten la grandeza de los edificios y el sevicio y adornos del culto; y en la segunda, 2 curas rectores con sus tenientes para la administración en la dilatada feligresía de su más principal y distinguido vecindario, que ocupa la más grande y extendida parte del centro de la ciudad".

[26] "… suntuoso, magnífico y verdaderamente soberbio y precioso […] una altísima y majestuosa cúpula construida con toda perfección, sostenida por cuatro pilastras muy gruesas y por cuatro arcos reales magníficos y espaciosos".

[27] According to a lawsuit filed by Ortiz in 1706 (AHNQ *Casas*, caja 3, expte. 3), the architect purchased a house in the vicinity of Santa Catalina in 1703 (fol. 81r), and several additional houses in the neighborhood of San Agustin in 1706 (131r). The houses near San Agustín were valued at 6,000 *patacones* in 1707, quite a significant amount for the time (AHNQ *Censos y Capellanías*, caja 5, expte. 2, fol. 41v).

[28] In the lawsuit of 1706, a woman with whom Ortiz had traded several houses accused him of deceptive practices, claiming that she had been the victim of fraud (AHNQ *Casas*, caja 3, expte. 3).

[29] Two of the four partners who invested in the gold mine along with Ortiz, Francisco Fons and Antonio Matheus, also appear as members of the ill-fated expedition to the volcano Pichincha as described below. The partners agreed to finance the mining operation in return for equal percentages of the proceeds.

[30] The following discussion is a summary of testimony that appears in the cited document. I have included parenthetical references to the folios of this document when appropriate.

[31] "… porque el alguacil mayor de corthe a tomado odio Y antipatia con mi p[ar]te y lo trata de Vejar Y molestar".

[32] "Don Joseph Jayme Ortis preso en la carcel rreal de corthe = Digo que ayer como a las nuebe oras del dia Vino el sarg[en]to mayor don bisente de la Vega a esta d[ic]ha Carcel, y con disfrase dixo que Yo fuera a la sala del tormento sin sauer para que y me enserro en ella asta las sinco y mas de la tarde lo qual auia sido por ynpulsar que Yo estaua para jurarme sin pasar tal auiso y por auer estado en esa sala me adolecio mas los dolores que me acompañan por cuya Rason me dixo el medico que no me leuantasse de la cama".

[33] "… lo trate bien I saque del zepo estando enfermo".

[34] "… trate bien a esta parte de palabras Y estando enfermo como representa lo tendra en parte desente con toda guarda y custodia".

[35] It is worth noting that several Mercedarian friars provided testimony in support of the accused (AHNQ *Criminales*, caja 17, expte. 5, fols. 124v–27v).

[36] The confraternity official elected to oversee the festivities (*prioste*) was the Count of Selva Florida, don Diego Ponce de León Castillejo, a prominent member of the upper nobility, whose election to this position characterizes the nature of leadership in the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament.

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